

Sweating

Star of the sticks



Berry Wesgateway

I NEVER WANTED to write a sports column.

Quite frankly, I know nothing about sports. But life takes some funny turns.

A few months ago Steve Exhume was taking Sweet 'n Lois Aspartame down into the basement for a few giggles. He was looking for the darkest, farthest, most hidden corner.

Sure enough he bumped into my desk.

Steve was a big fan of my city column when he was a boy and seemed quite excited about my still being alive.

Sweet 'n Lois called me a smelly old degenerate and took a powder which left Steve and me to talk about the old days, the days when the *Journal* was young and green.

A couple of hours and bottles of rye later, good ol' Steve tells me to pack up my things and get out of the basement because I'm writing a column again.

I was kinda hoping for Junior Journal but that was taken. In fact, it seemed nobody had an opening for an opinionated, obnoxious windbag.

Then Terry Jonestown jumped to the *Edmonton Sun*.

SO NOW I'M A sports writer. Unfortunately, Ray Turkey snagged Jonestown's desk so I'm still in the basement.

But I've got a late model Dumont to watch the games on, a stack of the *Hockey News* from 1972 to '75, and another bottle of rye.

Yup, I'm a sports writer.

IT ALL GOT ME to thinking about what funny turns some other lives have taken to get to the sports pages.

For instance, Glen Sather never thought he would make it to the sports pages as a coach.

He never did as a player.

Glen's plan was to retire young while he still had his boyish good looks and become a male prostitute.

He had even staked out a piece of turf on Yonge Street in Toronto only a few blocks away from Maple Leaf Gardens.

Then one day a disfiguring cut to his lip ended the commercial possibilities of Sather's kisser. All of a sudden he had a face only a real mother could love.

Thankfully, Peter Pocklington has always been a man's man with a strong sense of honor and loyalty.

Recognizing Sather's ability to wheel and deal (and sharing a common interest in photography), Pocklington made Sather top man of the Oilers.

It all worked out for the best, although the Oilers are still a bit shy of bodily contact.

THAT'S HOW IT GOES sometimes. Myself, I still think I could have made it to the sports pages as a rugby player if my knees held up.

As it is, though, I'm pretty happy here in the basement.

By MARVEY KNACKERS
Journal Staff Writer

"Well, heck, it's the greatest job in the whole world isn't it?"

And nobody is going to convince Rickey Muklukchuck of anything else.

Rickey, 11, swells with pride when he tells you about being an Edmonton Oiler stick boy and an integral cog in their Stanley Cup bound machine.

"Well, sure, like I'm not as important as Wayne Gretzky (an Oiler forward) but they traded Laurie Boschman and kept me, eh. I think that tells you something doesn't it?"

His numerous vital duties keep young Rickey busier than a goal judge behind Grant Fuhr. While the Oilers are in the dressing room, be it a game or just a practice, the lucky local lad is literally bouncing from player to player as they get the things they need, tape, skate laces, chewing gum or just a mouthful of water and a place to spit.

Then, while the Oilers are toiling on the ice, Rickey is working just as hard back in the dressing room. Sweaty jocks leave behind enough sweaty socks et al to fill several laundry hampers.

"Ya, well one time Mark Messier and a couple of the guys tied and gagged me with some of the old socks and stuff and dumped me in the laundry hamper. Cause I couldn't say nothing, the other stick boys didn't know I was there and just filled the hamper with the jocks and stuff. It smelled real bad at first but over the course of the evening I got used to it. Normally though, the team and I don't have time for playing hi-jinks that, heck, even that time I nearly got fired for not cleaning up the room."

Ironically, this plucky, pee-wee, puck-chaser's duties do not include anything to do with the sticks. "Well, ya, it surprised me at first too, but, like hockey players are real fussy about their sticks. Especially Paul Coffey. The first day I was here I picked up one of his sticks off the floor and leaned it against the locker. He was coming out of the shower and when he saw me he just started screaming. 'You've ruined it, you little fudging woof.' He was right too, cause when he hit me over the head with it, it broke just like nothing. Now I just stick to my job; cleaning up the shower and the can after these guys keeps you busy enough anyway."

When you are as important as "Ready Rickey" is to the Oilers, you are treated like one of the team. Although he does not get on the ice, the fresh faced fighter is one of the guys and is always eager to talk about the day he became an "official" Oiler.

"Fogey grabbed me and said it was time for me to join the ranks. Then he and the rest

of the guys tied me to the weight bench. Well, then Fogey said that you gotta get shaved to be in the NHL but I told him I didn't need to shave yet. Then he pulled down my pants and said I was right and everybody laughed. We have laughs like that all the time."

Of course Rickey is not the only Oiler stick boy. There are also Rimjob Grabmahashi, 10, and a new boy, 21 year old Donny Millar, called "Pack" and "Hack" respectively. But when the players talk about Rickey, you feel he is their favorite.

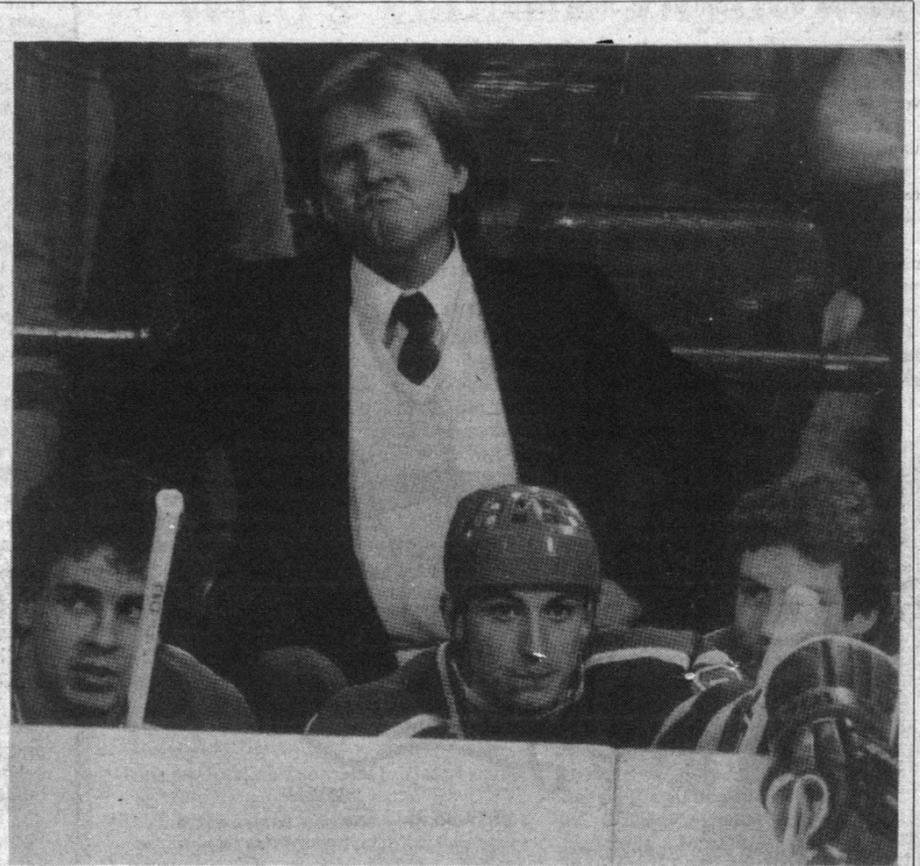
"Rickey, ya, he's good," smiles Kevin Lowe. "He comes when you call him and he doesn't give ya no guff."

"Hey, for a runt not bigger than my goal

pad he does a heck of a job," said Andy Moog. "He's a cute kid although he still smells funny from the time we left him in the laundry hamper."

"Ah, he ain't so tough, he got me with a lucky punch. I'd like to see him pull stuff like that in our building. I'll clobber him," said Dave Semenko, his wry, subtle sense of humor coming through.

Rickey knows how lucky he is to be with Edmonton's favorite hockey sons. He is grateful for this opportunity to learn responsibility and class from a great bunch of pals. As Rickey says, "I can't wait until I grow up and am big and strong and I can show these guys what I've learned."



Oilers suck a lemon

Will this season sour on Glen Sather and the Edmonton Oilers?

Eskimos' drug debacle dawning - defensive dooper Dave dying

By CAM COLESLAW
Journal Fluff Writer

Did the Edmonton Eskimos win five successive Grey Cups on talent, effort, determination and courage?

Or was there a darker, more sinister reason?

Monday, when Defensive lineman Dave Fennel entered the Misericordia Hospital as a victim of a massive drug overdose the lid blew off of a powder keg of accusation, denial, admission and speculation.

At least five other members of the defensive team alone have admitted to regular drug use over the past five seasons.

Another four members of the offensive team are confirmed dopers. It is rumored that over half the team may have used drugs on a more than incidental basis.

The drug in question is best known by its street name, Midol. Midol is ostensibly used as an anti-cramping agent and therefore most professional athletes are tempted to try the drug, which is usually ingested in pill form.

But Midol is a habit-forming drug and most users find it necessary to take the drug

on a regular basis. Dependency follows soon afterwards.

That the strong stalwart corps of what heretofore had been considered the greatest team in CFL history could be beaten and mastered by a little white pill is itself a bitter pill for their fans to suffer.

No one, however, will suffer more than those players who careers and even lives have been ruined by Midol dependency.

Defensive back Larry Highbaugh says he first tried Midol during training camp in 1977. "We all came to camp really bummed out 'cause of losing the Grey Cup to Montreal the year before. I'd been really down and came to camp out of shape, so I was having real bad problems with cramping. One of the guys, he's not with the team now and I'm not going to name him, said to try a little Midol. I tried it and I guess it helped. I really can't remember; I can't remember much of anything that has happened since then."

Midol destroys healthy young minds starting with the memory. Addicts also become flighty, irresponsible, capricious. They giggle a lot. Strangely, even though

their bodies are soon to collapse along with their minds, Midol users become obsessed with their appearance and dress.

"I was earning a hundred grand a year not counting playoff money" said an Eskimo who wished to remain anonymous, "but what I didn't spend on Midol I spent on clothes. Then I started trying to lose weight. That's when I lost my ability to play football."

As of this writing Dave Fennel is in a coma. There is no indication when or if he will recover. But as we grieve for him and the other Eskimos who succumbed a chemical crutch we must also face a more chilling possibility.

How could the Eskimo's have ever won five games, let alone five Grey Cups with such a massive drug problem? What if Edmonton won only because their drug problem was the league's SMALLEST. CFL commissioner Jake Gauder should order an immediate investigation into Midol abuse. Only when we are sure that our players are performing like men and not like doped up wimps can we be proud to be Canadian football fans.